

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,  
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION  
MINUTES OF OCTOBER 15, 2015  
SUFFOLK COUNTY POLICE MUSEUM  
YAPHANK, NEW YORK**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

Miles Borden	Trustee, Town of Smithtown
Kathleen Gooding	Vice Chair, Town of Shelter Island
Dawn Hopkins	Chair, Trustee, Town of Brookhaven
Debra Kolyer	Member of the Board
Arthur Leudesdorf	Trustee, Town of Southold
Terence McSweeney	Trustee, Town of Babylon
Terrence Pearsall	Member of the Board
William B. Sickles	Trustee, Town of Southampton

**ABSENT**

Gilbert Cardillo	Trustee, Town of Riverhead
Peter Leis	Trustee, Town of Islip
Alexander McKay	Trustee, Town of Huntington
Richard F. White, Jr.	Trustee, Town of East Hampton
VACANT	Member at Large

**PARKS DEPARTMENT**

Greg Dawson	Commissioner
Nick Gibbons	Principal Environmental Analyst
Richard Martin	Director of Historic Services
Barbara Rittman	Senior Clerk Typist

**GUESTS**

Christina DeLisi	Legislative Aide to Dep. Presiding Off. Jay Schneiderman
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**PUBLIC PORTION**

1. Brookhaven Town Councilwoman Connie Kepert (District #4) spoke regarding the Suffolk County Trap and Skeet facility in Southaven County Park. She strongly urged consideration in supporting her request to County Executive Bellone not to renew the contract license agreement with the operators. She stated that the Town of Brookhaven has issued many citations to the operators of the facility for violating the Town's noise ordinance which was put into place to protect the quality of life of Brookhaven Town residents. Civil proceedings are ongoing and residents affected must continue to deal with the noise.

Councilwoman Kepert added that the facility is not contributing to the County financially because of expenditures on an Analysis of Noise and Lead Mitigation report, capital improvements made to the facility, implementation of an Environmental Stewardship Program and appeals on litigation brought by the Town of Brookhaven and the Pine Barrens Society.

2. Past President of South Yaphank Civic Association, Johan McConnell thanked Councilwoman Connie Kepert for attending the meeting and offering her support to the community on the Trap and Skeet issue. She expressed that the range is costing the county and taxpayers more than it could ever return with its

expenses in the court cases against it. She added that there are lost assessed property taxes that were lowered from 170 of the homes surrounding the facility back in 2008.

3. John Palasek represented South Yaphank Civic Association regarding the Trap and Skeet facility. He expressed that there have been both civil and criminal lawsuits spanning over the course of ten years with repeated adjournments on those court proceedings. Mr. Palasek requested that the County place a stay on the optional two 5 year renewals in the contract license agreement. The vendor has been allowed to drag out the civil case and continue to conduct business so there is no motivation for him to bring the case to a timely conclusion.
4. Dr. Joseph Merckling also spoke regarding the Trap and Skeet facility. He lives in that neighborhood and expressed that the noise from the facility is an issue for his family on a daily basis since his backyard is 1500 feet from the range. He is a doctor with a practice in Bellport Village and he stated that he has to comply with all local Town, State, County & Federal laws or his business cannot legally be maintained. The Trap and Skeet vendor has broken Brookhaven law and he has been allowed to continue running his business because he has no incentive to resolve the issue. The range is costing the County thousands of dollars in legal expenses that is taken from his tax dollars. He enjoys living in close proximity to Southaven County Park but feels it has been destroyed. Patrons come from all over to visit the park and the Long Island Steamers for their children to enjoy riding the trains and many of them comment about hearing all the shooting going on. Dr. Merckling expressed that he doesn't feel it prudent to renew the Trap and Skeet contract at this time.
5. Robert Ford spoke about pedestrian safety at the County historic sites along Yaphank Avenue. He feels that it is very dangerous for people either walking or bicycling and that Yaphank Avenue is over utilized. He suggested possibly installing a traffic light at the corner outside of the Police Museum. Mr. Ford added that the culvert that Carmans River flows through appears to be very antiquated and that pedestrian walkways along Yaphank Avenue are projects that the County could consider for the safety of its visitors.

Mr. Ford also thanked the Parks Trustees and the Parks Department for allowing the Blues Festival to be held at the Long Island Maritime Museum on Saturday and Sunday, 10/17-18. Funds from the event will be contributed to the LMM.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 17, 2015**

**A motion to approve the minutes was made by Trustee Borden and seconded by Board Member Pearsall. The minutes were unanimously approved by a vote of 8-0-0.**

### **COMMISSIONER'S REPORT**

Commissioner Dawson thanked Bob Kessler, president of the Yaphank Historical Society for hosting the meeting.

Commissioner Dawson asked Nick Gibbons to give an update on the erosion project at Smith Point CP. Nick reported that the dredge arrived on Saturday and dredging operations began on Monday this week. They dredged and placed 15,000 yards to start. Normally, three loads per day are completed. With 1.5 million cubic yards to be placed, the project should take about 120 work days. Estimates for completion are February or March.

Outer beach access is restored and will continue to be open until November 29<sup>th</sup>. It will then be closed down to the general public. In the meantime, there is security to allow for access around the active construction site.

Unfortunately, a 40 foot sailboat with a 60 foot mast washed up on the beach at Smith Point several weeks back. The owner was rescued from the ocean and the County has been working hard to get the boat removed from the beach as soon as possible. Burma Road will be used to bypass recreational traffic around the boat site.

Commissioner Dawson reported that with continued good weather, the golf courses and campgrounds have been doing well.

Commissioner Dawson thanked Bob Kessler for attending the trustee meeting and also attending the last legislative meeting. At the last legislative meeting, the Parks Department was able to acquire approval for \$300,000 to go towards its historic capital fund. The vote appropriated the bond and it will be used to make improvements to the Homan Gerard House. A \$300,000 grant for the Gardner Foundation was also submitted.

Commissioner Dawson reported that the irrigation project at West Sayville Golf Course is finishing up. The well is currently being drilled and the plans are to be completed in time for spring, 2016 reopening.

### **CHAIR'S REPORT**

Chair Hopkins requested clarification on the legislation to open up beach access. Commissioner Dawson stated that it is for the opening of all outer beaches to 4 x 4 driving. He will send Chair Hopkins a copy of the legislation.

Chair Hopkins inquired about the North Fork County Park public meeting held last month. Nick Gibbons reported that approximately 30-40 people attended the meeting and about 90% of them were against active recreation. A continuation of using the entire park for passive recreation is the preference, rather than anything that is proposed in the conceptual plan. The southern 2/3 of the park is earmarked for active recreation in the proposal and the northern 1/3 of the property already dedicated to passive recreation is closest to the residential homes in the area. Nick stated that there will be one or two more advisory meetings, after which there will be a Master Plan process that will solicit additional good/bad feedback from the public. Commissioner Dawson added that when the 300 acre North Fork property was purchased for \$18 million, 2/3 of it was intended to be purposed for active recreation.

Trustee Sickles inquired as to whether the general public will be made aware of the plans for the North Fork property so that additional input can be considered. He added that there are probably a lot of campers that would be supportive of additional camping opportunities in that location and they may not be aware of the proposal for the property, or the meetings. Nick stated that thus far the meetings have been at night in Riverhead, which may turn residents from Western Suffolk away from attendance. However, when the Master Plan process moves forward, there will be more opportunity for a larger cross section of the public to voice their support. Carmella Masem is a friend of Suffolk Committee for Camping and she holds a seat and voice on the committee, as well as Parks Trustee Gil Cardillo.

### **ROUND TABLE**

Trustee Borden stated that the Parks Board of Trustees may want to revisit the Trap and Skeet issue. Chair Hopkins supported the request. Board member Pearsall stated that the agreement was originally approved by the Legislature in December, 1974. An RFP went out and was awarded in 2005 for a ten year agreement with an option for two additional five year renewals.

Trustee Borden announced that his second term of office ends on November 30<sup>th</sup> and that after a lot of careful consideration he would not be seeking another term. He enjoyed working with the Parks trustees and commented that he learned much from the Parks staff. He will be in attendance at the November meeting and hopefully his potential replacement appointee as well, who has a good background, does a lot of environmental

work and will be a great asset to the board. Commissioner Dawson expressed that Trustee Borden will be greatly missed and thanked Trustee Borden for his service.

Board Member Pearsall commented on the good job the staff does at the Robinson Dog Park. The grounds are always nicely groomed, all holes dug up by the pets are filled in a timely manner and the park is always clean.

Trustee Borden and Trustee Sickles both agreed with Board Member Pearsall about the great work the Parks staff does and that many employees go above and beyond what is required in their jobs. Commissioner Dawson agreed and commended Superintendent Tony Trotta on staff cooperation.

Trustee Sickles commented on three separate incidents that occurred at Shinnecock East County Park this past summer. He stated that in addition to those particular documented incidents, numerous people over the course of the summer reported to him verbally about the various experiences they had at that park. Trustee Sickles stressed that he believes that the lack of oversight with seasonal staff there is the problem and what is needed. A lot of these issues could have been avoided before letters were written and complaints made, and Trustee Sickles stressed that he feels it needs to be addressed. The East Zone Supervisor gets out there, but supervision is not present on a daily basis when issues arise. Commissioner Dawson stated that he will take it into consideration.

Trustee Leudesdorf agreed with Commissioner Dawson that beach permit stickers must be permanently affixed to vehicles. It is required in the Town of Southold, even though some residents don't like them placed on their expensive cars. Commissioner Dawson stated that next year, all stickers will be affixed to vehicles by Parks staff on the day of purchase.

Trustee Leudesdorf requested to be kept updated on plans for the North Fork County Park because of Town of Riverhead's close proximity to Town of Southold. He is chairman of the Beach, Park and Recreation Committee for Town of Southold and future plans for North Fork CP are of particular interest.

Trustee Sickles inquired about the outcome of allowing horses at Cedar Beach CP. Commissioner Dawson stated that Cedar Beach was the site of local residents taking their horses for "Pony Swims" in the Shelter Island Sound. Some local residents brought it to the attention of the Parks Department and it is not an approved site for this activity. Park Rangers were asked to put a stop to it without issuing any summonses. The only locations where horseback riding is legal in a Suffolk County Park is on designated trails. The horse club complied with the rules but asked if a permit could be issued for one evening per week. For reasons of sanitary conditions in the water and the close proximity of Cornell Cooperative's Marine Science Lab to Cedar Beach, the Commissioner felt it not to be an appropriate location for that type of activity. Horseback riding permits are issued at Smith Point County Park beach between the months of November and March.

Richard Martin gave an update on the Yaphank Historic District. Activities started at the Hawkins House which is located next door to the Police Museum. Yaphank Historic Society gives tours at the Hawkins House during the summer season and work is currently being continued across the street. All of the property north of the Long Island Expressway at the north end of Southaven County Park is part of the Historic Trust. It includes archeological sites, the Weeks Family Octagon Foundation House and the Historic Society. With assistance from Nick Gibbons, a self-guided nature trail was created throughout the property. The Booth House is opposite the post office on Main Street and is now open to the public. The Historic Society staffs the Booth House and offers tours during the summer. Restoration of the Homan House was just approved and is located opposite the Hawkins House. Improvements around the Homan House have already begun. Nick Gibbons assisted in having a formal parking lot completed there for both hikers and kayakers. New split rail and decking surrounds the newly repaired launch site completed for canoeing and kayaking. Bob Kessler, Nick and crew from the Sheriff's Department contributed to completing the project. Patrons with kayaks will no longer have

to park on the shoulder of Main Street which is very busy with large trucks on a daily basis. There is also a brand new boardwalk that leads down to the river.

Yaphank Historic Society President, Bob Kessler explained what work has been completed and what work is still in store for the Homan House restoration. Bob reported that all of the stone work around the foundation has been completed and the outside property has been cleaned up. The Sheriff's crew assisted in installing all new storm windows as well. The crew has also done a lot of work at the Swezey House in town and there has been a good cooperative effort with the Sheriff's crew over the past four years. They also helped paint and started making storm windows for Hawkins House. It is hoped that work on the Homan House will be completed in about 1½ years.

The next Parks Trustee meeting will be held at Deepwells Farm in St. James on Thursday, November 19, 2015.

**A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Trustee Borden and was seconded by Trustee Gooding. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 8-0-0.**